

[Proposals for a special issue of SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism, titled 'Breaking Earth'](#)

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Art, Art History & Visual Studies, Environmental History / Studies, Geography, History of Science, Medicine, and Technology, Literature

We are seeking proposals for a special issue of SubStance: A Review of Theory and Literary Criticism:

Breaking Earth

Alexis Rider and Paul Harris, co-coordinators/-editors

“He takes all that, the strata and the magma and the people and the power, in his imaginary hands. Everything. He holds it. He is not alone. The earth is with him.

Then he breaks it.” — N.K. Jemisin, *The Fifth Season*

The Breaking Earth project invites disruptive engagements with concepts and terms that have become touchstones in the geologic/planetary turn in the inhumanities. The geologic timescale and current debates around the Anthropocene implicitly uphold a view of time, history, and knowledge grounded in linearity and control that operationalize in the extractive carbon capital economies fueled by colonialism and slavery. The geo-logic of chronostratigraphy, the drive to compile a complete rock record, is inextricably entangled with the mining of geophysical energies and resources. Skips in the record are seen as lost time and obstacles to production: in geologic lexicon, a gap in deposition of sediment is termed a hiatus; a gap thought to be caused by erosion a vacuity: together these words, bursting with absence, are “geologic unconformities.” But as Hugh Raffles writes in *The Book of Unconformities*, “Even the most solid, ancient, and elemental materials are as lively, capricious, willful, and indifferent as time itself; ... life is filled with unconformities—revealing holes in time that are also fissures in feeling, knowledge, and understanding.”

The Breaking Earth project seeks contributions to a special issue of SubStance (Johns Hopkins UP) in which scholars and artists explore how unconformities open productive and provocative means of reflecting on life and time. This work will enact an attention to multiplicity over universality and trace the way geophysical energy and power pools and flows--and can be redirected--through Earth and people, both. As inhuman geographer Katherine Yusoff suggests, “there is not one but many Earths, preexistent and possible, within this particular geochemical-cosmic milieu.” Breaking Earth is an exploration of how these many past, present, and future Earthly formations can help us reconceive of

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Earthly existence in the Anthropocene.

Breaking Earth is inspired in part by N.K. Jemisin's Broken Earth trilogy, in which geologic and human power interweave in complex webs among bodies born of chiasmic crossings of Anthroprogeny and Geo-orogeny. Conceived as a companion almanac to Jemisin's trilogy—in which reference to that work is optional--the volume pursues new ways of reading, and being with, the geos of this planet. In doing so, Breaking Earth seeks to reframe and deepen the discussions, both historical and philosophical, around the relationship between geology and humanity.

Abstracts (ca. 250 words) for essays, artworks, or digital contributions due by email Nov. 1, 2021.

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